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NEW YORK, N.Y.
POST

Approved For Release 2000/05/24 : CIA-RDP75-00149R00040012

E-380,764

S-279,928

SEP 19 1967

The CIA at 20

—Best Wishes

From LBJ

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WASHINGTON—The Central Intelligence Agency held a private 20th birthday party, but the word seeped through from its massive, secluded headquarters across the Potomac at Langley, Va.

President Johnson sent a letter praising the CIA as "the best in the world" in the highly competitive field of international intelligence.

Vice President Humphrey appeared at the ceremonies in the 499-seat CIA auditorium at which CIA director Richard Helms gave awards to employees who have served the agency for more than 10 years.

Eight hundred and three persons who have been with the agency since its beginnings in 1947 were honored at the ceremony yesterday. No one would say how many employees are on CIA's payroll now.

Johnson's letter recalled that the nation had "no broad-scale professional intelligence service worthy of the name" before the CIA was formed.

"A Dedicated Core"

"Since that time," the letter continued, "you have become a dedicated and disciplined core of professionals, with clearly-defined responsibilities. . . .

"You give us information on which decisions affecting the course of history are made. Your product must be as perfect as is humanly possible. . . .

"You have built on a solid foundation in these past 20 years. America relies on your constant dedication to the truth—on your commitment to the democratic ideal. I believe our trust is well placed."

Humphrey commended the agency for development of professional competence in a vital and exacting field.

"You have been learning as you have been doing," Humphrey said as he expressed appreciation on behalf of the President and himself for "service beyond the call of duty."

"We have gained a much broader knowledge of the world because of you in this great agency and I believe that the world is a better place for the people of this earth because there has been, is, and will continue to be a CIA," the Vice President said.

Los Angeles Times-Washington Post